

BSD TODAY

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The Official News Bulletin of the Building Services Department

New Employees 'Welcomed' at Reception



A welcome reception for new employees from the Houston Police and Health & Human Services Departments brought out the food, the fun - and a little bit of frolic.

In the private sector, corporate consolidations often result in mass relocation of personnel. While the Building Services Department handles the consolidation of personnel, building supplies and services from other departments, the approach is softer. For example, the majority of Houston Police and Health & Human Services Department transferees actually remained at their respective work sites.

"Consolidations are sometimes a change in management and procedure," says BSD Director Monique McGilbra. "We know these employees are experts in their fields, so it is to our benefit and theirs to keep them on board, doing the same jobs they have always done in the same locations. We deliberately and purposefully aim for that."

But some do relocate, like Angela Jackson and Jean Jones, from HPD.

"When we first heard we were going to be a part of BSD, a lot of people felt like they were going to lose their jobs, or would have to change positions," says Ms. Jones, a Financial Analyst III. "But Ms. McGilbra put to rest a lot of the concerns about what BSD was all about, saying there would not be drastic changes. And I found the people here open and congenial."

"My biggest concern was that being a new department, would it be viable? And you're concerned about training, avenues of promotion. A lot of people were scared," says Ms. Jackson, a Buyer. "But when I got over here, I was pleasantly surprised." The fact that Human Resources' Jane Cheeks went to meet them - before they ever relocated to BSD - impressed her. "And when we got here, they had our work stations set up. I felt

*Inside BSD Today...
Employee of the
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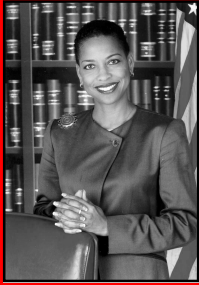
MAYOR
Lee P. Brown

Director
Monique McGilbra

Editor
Mignette Y. Dorsey

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Point of View



Monique McGilbra
Director

Happy holidays, and "welcome" to our newest employees from the Houston Police and Health & Human Services Departments.

I believe the most important asset our department has is its employees. Our mission is unique, one that brings us into constant contact with thousands of other department staff.

When we are charged with maintaining a facility that houses many tenants such as 611 Walker, or managing construction of a public facility like a library or park, the reputations of other departments are on the line - as well as our own. Yet, time and time again, you make it happen.

Unfortunately, we are often charged with consolidating personnel from other departments. While these "new" situations can produce anxiety for those involved, you still manage to pull together, performing your assigned tasks with professionalism and efficiency. As we continue to grow, let us think of ourselves as a "team," ever striving to make surroundings pleasant for our client departments, while leasing, maintaining, designing and constructing their properties with excellence, and verve.

Speaking of team effort, congratulations to those who helped BSD exceed its Combined Municipal Campaign goal by 89 percent. That speaks well of a new department that boasts eight employees who contributed 1 percent of their salaries; two who gave 2 percent; and one who gave beyond that. Constance Caldwell, you're awesome!

In closing, be encouraged to forward news of your recent awards, unique charitable affiliations, even unusual hobbies, to our Public Information Office at 900 Bagby. We want future issues of *BSD Today* filled with news ... about you. Photos are welcome.

A Taste of Giving at CMC Fundraiser



"Bring it on." "More, more, more..."



"Clown down... yeah."




"Step right up! Hurry! Hurry!"

Can you link the captions to the correct photos?

One couldn't be sure if the attendees of the Sept. 29 Combined Municipal Campaign Bar-B-Que had more fun eating ... or giving. But you can be sure they did both since the Building Services Department raised \$600 that day, for a grand total of \$13,271.44. Not bad considering that the department's goal was only \$7,000.

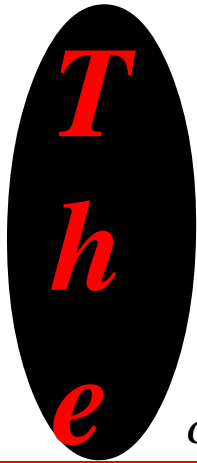
"I was so pleased to hear that as the City's newest department, we exceeded our goal by 89 percent," said BSD Director Monique McGilbra. "That makes a statement, and tells me that we are unselfish, with giving hearts."

In addition, many gave at least 1 percent of their annual salaries or beyond. The following employees are now official members of the City's 1% Club: Carletta Dirden, Lynwood Delphin, Theodore Low, Jr., Darryl Malloy, Monique McGilbra, Harold Stanton, Billy Youngblood and Ricardo Sanchez. Moreover, Robert Toliver, IV and Ja'Nice Sparks gave 2 percent. Constance Caldwell gave above 2 percent.

Speaking of Ms. Caldwell, it is only fitting that one who gave so generously be remembered during her time of loss. As a department, we extend our sympathies to Ms. Caldwell, whose mother, Mrs. Velma Caldwell Spates, passed recently. To make donations, call Georgia Lewis (437-6580), Janice Moore (437-6568), or Maple Stewart (437-6506) at City Hall Annex. Employees at 611 Walker may contact Clemencia "Clem" Singletary at 837-0986. 

Retirees Say, 'Farewell'

BSD extends its best wishes to the following retirees: Kenneth Ashworth, James Earhart, Vickie Volin and Modesta Rojas, all of whom retired in September, 2000. The same well wishes to Hattie Burnett who retired Nov. 30, and Michael Bradford who leaves Dec. 28.



Client's Corner

by Ann Sheridan, P.E.
Solid Waste Management Department



Teamwork Demolishes Eyesore

A unique interdepartmental project involving the Departments of Solid Waste Management, Building Services and Public Works and Engineering, is nearing its end. The contract for the demolition of the Holmes Road Incinerators, located at 3300 Belfort, was initiated using the Neighborhood Protection standard operating procedure for emergency demolition.

Due to large amounts of asbestos and lead-based paint (popular materials in the 1940s when the first of the three incinerators was built), the City used a new approach. Instead of contracting with a demolition company which would have subcontracted out to an asbestos abatement company, the City contracted with an asbestos abatement company, and the demolition company served as subcontractor.

The Solid Waste Management Department, owner of the facility, presented the Request for Council Action to City Council. Building Services Department's Gabriel Mussio, project manager, prepared contract documents and specifications for the job, along with ATC Associates Inc., which provided project management services. Larry Scott with Public Works' Neighborhood Protection Division provided valuable insight on demolition and monitored the demolition contractor. So far, it has been the most successful demolition project I have seen. Similar projects in which I have been involved had unpleasant surprises, such as "unknown conditions."

There have been some humorous moments. For once, the contractors are outnumbered at meetings. But the most fun was



Did You Know...?

A little known fact is that glass beads were used in the burning chambers of the Holmes Road Incinerators, prompting neighborhood children to refer to it as the "Marble Factory".

The 1965 drowning death of a child in the massive pit, (left), used to store garbage, resulted in public protests. The EPA closed the facility in 1971, and the City later gave it the "Dangerous Building" classification. The facility was demolished in October, 2000.

Editor's Note: Historical information was provided by Ollie Schiller.

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Technicalities

by Kent Twyman
LAN Specialist

Recently, the Building Services Department experienced an outbreak of the "Loveletter" virus. The virus was attached to emails with the subject: "FW: Joke". This virus, along with hundreds of other computer viruses, continues to threaten our network.

To stop the spread of these computer viruses, consider the following:

1. If you ever receive an email with the subject: "FW: Joke", DO NOT OPEN IT, AND DELETE IT IMMEDIATELY.

2. If you receive other suspicious emails, DO NOT open them until you have contacted a member of the networking group.

3. We have also made it possible for all users to update their McAfee Virus Scan software. To update your McAfee software:

- Go to the BSD Shared drive. (Please notify us if you require assistance locating the shared "T" drive.)

- Go to the "McAfee Virus Definition Updates" folder and double click to open the folder. Double click the "file name".dat file. For example, you would double click the "4095.dat" file. The program will automatically update your McAfee Virus Scan software. You will need to follow the instructions given to you once you have double clicked the DAT file. The entire process should not take more than 10 minutes. Check this folder about every two weeks for updates.

Concerning the use of the "T" drive, or the "Shared Drive," it is available to every employee in the Building Services Department. The purpose of drive "T" is to share and transfer nonsensitive files from PC to PC without the use of a floppy diskette. After these files have been retrieved, delete them from the "T" drive. For questions concerning how or whether a file should be deleted from the "T" drive, and for general questions regarding your computer, contact Kent Twyman: (713) 437-6586, Robert Williams: (713) 221-0439 or Yusuf Ali: (713) 437-6823.

BSD to Audit Underground Storage Tanks



Present at the UST seminar were HPD Helicopter Patrol Division's Lt. John King, left, and Officer Dan Schwarzbach, right.

Most of us are unaware of what lies below the surface of the pavement. Not true for City department personnel who attended an Oct. 18 BSD seminar. The topic? Underground Storage Tanks (USTs). The Building Services Department is responsible for making sure City-owned USTs are in compliance with State law.

A recent BSD seminar on the topic underscored the necessity for regular inspections of USTs owned by various City departments. Indeed, City departments that operate and maintain a fleet of vehicles were represented: Aviation, Solid Waste Management, Public Works & Engineering, Fire, Parks & Recreation and the Houston Police Department.

"This class is to teach us what to look for. The fire trucks are required to keep their tanks gassed up. They normally gas up every morning," said Richard Allen, Assistant Superintendent for Facility Management, Fire Department.

Since 1989, the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission has had rules in place that regulate USTs. In 1999, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 2815 requiring gasoline storage tank owners and operators to annually certify that their USTs are in compliance with TNRCC regulations. As stated in TNRCC certification instructions, "This law prohibits a common carrier from making a delivery of a regulated substance [motor fuel] into an underground storage tank unless there is a valid current certificate for the facility which is issued after the [TNRCC] certification is made."

The law also makes it both a civil and criminal offense for tank owners, operators and common carriers who violate it. Such measures are necessary since a leaking tank could impact groundwater, a topic emphasized at the Oct. 18 UST seminar.

"These are environmental compliance matters," says Tanwir Badar in Building Services' Environmental Section. "If we do not comply with these regulations, vendors cannot deliver the gas. Imagine a fire truck with no gas."

Lt. John King with HPD's Helicopter Patrol Division gives another reason why keeping USTs in good condition is vital. "One reason why it is important is if water gets into the fuel tank, or rust, it is dangerous for the helicopter crew."

To that end, Building Services Department staff, along with the respective department representatives and City consultants, are charged with inspecting nearly 300 USTs in Houston. If a leaking or damaged UST is discovered, repairs are made, soil samples are taken, and the TNRCC is notified immediately, says Mr. Badar.

By January 2001, certification forms for all City USTs must be submitted to the TNRCC, which will issue certificates by March. After May 2001, gasoline vendors will not deliver to tank owners lacking valid certificates. BSD will oversee the auditing process of USTs on an annual basis.

P r o files

by Mignette Y. Dorsey

Smooth Operator Caught in Spotlight



Keith Weynandt, left, and Monique McGilbra, right, congratulate Paul Marro on being selected Employee-of-the-Month for December, 2000.

It is not uncommon to find him adjusting a spotlight around City Hall. But never did Paul Marro imagine that he would be caught in its glare.

Mr. Marro was recently honored as BSD's first Employee-of-the-Month. As such, he becomes the subject of *Profiles* in this first edition of *BSD Today*. Among other things, he receives reserved parking on Level P1 of City Hall Annex for the month of December.

His office is in the audio visual control room behind Council Chambers, from where he helps make sure Chamber A/V presentations run smoothly. But he does more than that.

"When I know there is something that needs to be done, I try my best to get it done ... it does not have to be electrical," he says. "It could be moving something. If it's going to make the operations of this building work smoother, I'm there."

Mr. Marro began his career in the now defunct General Services Department in 1988, handling electrical-related work at City Hall, City Hall Annex, 61 Riesner and Municipal Courts. Over the years, he became self-taught in the audio visual field, a need he says was lacking at City Hall in the old days.

"Before, people would show up [at Council Chambers] without knowing how to use their own A/V equipment. Now, I can broadcast presentations from the control room," he says. "I have people emailing me all their presentations, especially around budget time."

It is his proficiency and positive attitude that caught the attention of Agenda Director Marty Stein, prompting her to write, "Through his initiative and perseverance, multi-media presentations now go off without a hitch ... He is adept at problem-solving, always goes the extra mile to attend to important details, and communicates effectively with Council Members and Mayor's staff."

BSD Deputy Director Larry Baker concurs. "Paul has not only been rec-

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Safety

First!

Ted Low
Safety Coordinator

You are standing on a ladder, changing light bulbs at your facility. Things are going well today: the boss is happy; the birds are singing; the weather is nice; and things in Florida are settling down. Then, WHAM! Your foot slips from the second rung of the ladder, and you fall to the tile below. "Will I live, die? Will this affect my EPE bonus?"

You have just experienced a workplace accident. Now what? Let's look at BSD procedures for some answers.

1) If you are involved in any kind of workplace accident, notify your supervisor as soon as possible, if not immediately. Statistics show that for every one workplace major injury, there were over 600 near misses. Yet the near misses also need investigating - to eliminate them if at all possible.

2) Supervisors should contact the Safety Office at the numbers shown below. The Safety Staff will assist as needed, investigate the accident with the supervisor, and provide the necessary forms.

3) Supervisors have 24 hours to report the claim to the Third Party Administrator.

Here are a few helpful numbers you should know: Ted Low, Safety Office: 713-641-9532; pager, 713-606-0212; cell, 713-306-4364; and Kathy Vaughn, Administrative Services, 713-437-6564.

Ted Low is a Certified Safety Professional in the Administrative Services Division. He joined BSD July 15, 2000 after working in Human Resources Department's Central Safety Office.

Eye on Security

Don Thompson
Loss Prevention Division

Q) What are some of the things holiday shoppers need to remember this season?

A) When you go shopping, always be aware of your surroundings. I see so many people get caught up in the holiday spirit, in a daze, maybe thinking, "What am I going to buy Aunt Susan?" Rather than, "I'm in a shopping mall parking lot. Let me get inside the store and then I'll think about that." Look around. Don't just stare at the ground, thinking of what you have to do. So many are attacked from behind only because they didn't look around. A criminal probably won't approach you if they see that you are alert. Another easy thing is just to take a shopping buddy. Try not to go the mall alone.

Q) What if you are driving and you realize someone is following you?

A) Make sure your doors are locked, and drive to a lighted area where there are a lot of people.

Q) What about exiting the store?

A) Before you leave the store, have your keys in hand with the door key singled out. Get into your car as quickly as possible and lock the doors, even before putting on your seat belt.

Q) What if an assailant accosts you on the way to the car?

A) Remember, personal safety comes first. If the assailant demands your purse, wallet, or car, comply with the demand. If the assailant wants to abduct you, there are several things you can do: run, scream or resist. If you choose to resist, remember that you are holding a potential weapon - your car door key - which can do great damage to an eye, or neck.

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Who Said Only Words Can Tell A Story?



1st Annual BSD Golf Tournament! September 16, 2000


Quotables

"Not everything faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed, until it is faced."

James Baldwin

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ognized by Marty Stein, but all departments. He always gives 110 percent."

Mr. Marro believes 110 percent is the least one should contribute to any job. "You have to be committed and dedicated ... What you put in is what you get out of the job." 

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swapping roles on the RCA. PW&E and BSD are accustomed to being the lead elements on joint department RCAs. Trying to convince their staff that the Solid Waste Management Department did not require a cover letter that needed the initials of multi-layers of management, and that all we needed was a simple signature at the bottom of the form from the department directors signifying acknowledgment, was quite a challenge. We were saved by BSD's Yolanda Cessna and PW&E's Denise Agee, Susan McMillian and George Bravenec.

We also had a fun time with an interdepartmental press conference. Trying to determine whom to notify was another challenge. Parks personnel, Alfred Brantley and Crispin Alcee arrived, cautiously made a couple of suggestions, and I instantly bowed to their experience and turned them loose to direct the final setup of the tent, chairs, etc. Solid Waste Management Maintenance staff provided the tent and chairs - after they mowed a large area - during the September heat. Sgt. McLemore from the Houston Police Department showed up with some friends and handled parking for City staff and the public, making it look easy. The citizens who attended were long-time residents. Their excitement was inspiring and touching.

It has been a fun and positive experience. And what a treat to work with motivated and competent City staff. Just to know that when you start digging through the specifications, someone else is looking, too. I hope we continue to have projects like this!

BSD Gets a Messenger

Welcome Marcus Moten. Hired by the Design & Construction Division to serve all BSD divisions, Mr. Moten will handle internal and external mail deliveries, as well as collect and sort mail, supplies and packages. His daily route begins at 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., and includes stops at City Hall, City Hall Annex, downtown library, 1200 Travis, Municipal Courts, 601 Sawyer and Health, Fire and Parks & Recreation Department headquarters. To schedule a delivery, call Brenda Smith at 713-221-0400.

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like family coming to dinner.”

Human Resources' Lula Nelson also left a favorable impression by taking the necessary steps to ensure that there were no payroll interruptions. Yet some nostalgia lingers.

“I do miss [HPD's] wellness center. It was so nice. I miss that,” Ms. Jackson says.

SECURITY, from page 6

Q) If I have a license to carry a concealed weapon, can I carry the weapon to the mall when I shop?

A) Be aware of the fact that most, if not all shopping malls, prohibit carrying concealed handguns in their establishments. However, they must comply with State law by having signs clearly posted at entrances.

Q) What about shopping bags?

A) As you make purchases and return to your car, place your bags in the trunk. Do not leave cell phones or valuables visible in the car. Cell phones are a hot commodity and vehicles can be broken into very quickly.

Q) What preventive steps should I take in case my purse is snatched?

A) Select clothing that will allow you to carry your wallet, credit cards, check book, and drivers license in your pockets, thereby eliminating the target. Before you go shopping, if you do carry a purse, make a list of all your credit cards and the 800 numbers to call in the event that your wallet or purse is stolen.

Q) What if someone approaches my car before I can lock the door?

A) Whatever they want, give it to them. Material things can be replaced.

Don Thompson, Deputy Assistant Director, worked as a Houston Police Officer for 25 years before retiring and joining the Loss Prevention Group of the Public Works & Engineering Department. His group was transferred to BSD in May of 2000.

2001 Holiday Schedule

News Year's Day, Mon., Jan. 1

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Mon., Jan. 15

Memorial Day, Mon., May 28

Independence Day, Wed., July 4

Labor Day, Mon., Sept. 3

Veterans Day, Mon., Nov. 12

Thanksgiving Day, Thurs., Nov. 22

Day After Thanksgiving, Fri., Nov. 23

Christmas Eve, Mon., Dec. 24

Christmas Day, Tues., Dec. 25

Personnel Matters

by Lula Nelson
Administrative Services Division

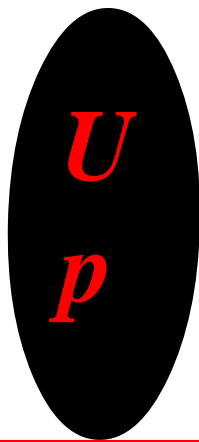
The Accrued Leave Donation Program allows employees to voluntarily donate a part of their accrued vacation to assist another employee who has exhausted all sick and vacation time due to serious illness or injury.

Since the Accrued Leave Donation Program began in May, 1992, hundreds of employees have benefited from the donation of vacation time from their co-workers. Some employees have also received donated vacation time from employees who work in other departments. Below is what Janice Moore, Management Analyst III, Administrative Services, had to say about the program:

"During my illness this past summer, employees of the Building Services Department donated their hardworking hours to me. The donated time helped me to recover and insurance benefits to continue without any interruptions. My heart was overjoyed when I was informed of the donations. My family and I will always be grateful for the generous donations from Building Services Department's employees and their unselfish acts of kindness. The Donated Leave Program for the City of Houston is the best!"

For additional information regarding the guidelines for receiving donated time, please contact your payroll representative, or Kathy Vaughn at (713) 437-6564.

Lula Nelson serves as Human Resources Manager in the Administrative Services Division. She has been employed with BSD since its inception in July 1999.



C l o s e

by Mignette Y. Dorsey

It's true. The Building Services Department is unique.

Few can boast of working in a City department that has existed for less than two years with fresh niches for the taking. Yet most did not arrive by their own choice. Rather, they were transferred from other departments.

When I interviewed for the position of Public Information Officer, I remember inquiring about how the department came into being. How did many feel about being transferees? That was an important consideration. I feared such situations could foster resentment.

I do not recall the answer I received, and it doesn't really matter.

Reporters are smitten with an incurable ailment: the need to know. Sometimes, it can get us into trouble, but usually, it results in a fruitful endeavor called, an investigation. Like novelists, reporters are questioning observers. We are intrigued by people. We listen to what they say - and what they don't say.


I have observed much during my three-month tenure. BSD has a clear vision, with capable staff bent on carrying it out. I have met people here who are enthusiastic, focused, resourceful, confident. It is fascinating to see people from different departments pull together, moving projects forward.

I have also met people in BSD who are sorely unhappy, exuding an air of powerlessness, like someone has toyed with their lives, leaving them no say in the matter. For the record, let me say that I have also read the Internet. Talk about a window into the psyche! Geez.

Being transferred, laid-off, even fired, is adversity. Yet for some, it is a blessing. It's a matter of perspective.

I recall the day I walked into the now defunct *Houston Post* and encountered security personnel from the rival paper. Entering the newsroom, the editor-in-chief told me, "We're closing, Mignette. I'm sorry. You have until four o'clock to be out." I cried, packed up - and started a new career.

Seemingly, the guy the editor-in-chief had fired months prior was worse off. That guy packed up, too. Then he started an internet access company. It became one of the fastest growing small businesses in Houston. He later sold it to a telecommunications conglomerate. He is a multimillionaire today.

What is perceived as a negative can be turned into a positive - but never when one is obsessed with that perceived negative. Focus. Realize daily that the issue is always, "Am I productive?" 

Note: We invite written comments in response to this column, or anything appearing in BSD Today. Of course, anonymous letters will not be published.